

Past is present for caretakers of historic homes

Living in history

By Patti Doten
GLOBE STAFF

The "right" address for some people is part of the climb up the social and financial ladder. But not for Dan Byrne, who lives in the oldest house in Boston; or Naomi Gray, who occupies a stately Federal house in Salem; or Campbell Waterhouse, who calls the King Caesar House in Duxbury his home.

These three are caretakers. Although they came to their caretaking duties by very different paths, they share several traits: an interest in American history, an appreciation of beautiful surroundings, and delight at the opportunity to pay low rent or no rent at all. In exchange, they're all willing to perform a few duties — and to tolerate the intrusion of the touring public into their

CARETAKERS, Page H5



GLOBE STAFF PHOTO/PAM BERRY

King Caesar House caretaker Campbell Waterhouse works on an exhibit in his cottage.

For caretakers whose homes are in historic houses, the past is present — and so are the tourists

it. If something happened to this house, it's gone forever."

King Caesar House

In Duxbury, Campbell Waterhouse, 28, doesn't live in the King Caesar House per se, but in the home's former woodshed. But this is no usual woodshed — it's 10 times the size of those small metal structures we now see in back yards. The King Caesar shed gives Waterhouse a large living room with fireplace, a spacious kitchen, a guest room, and a bath on the first floor, plus a screened porch. On the second floor are two bedrooms, an office with bal-

cony, and a bath. He has furnished these rooms with his own furniture.

"I moved here last October because the other caretakers were leaving," says Waterhouse, who had previously been a caretaker at the Paul Revere House in the North End while working at the Boston Genealogical Society on Newbury Street. His duties now include overseeing and maintaining the four properties owned by the Duxbury Historical Society.

That encompasses shoveling snow, making minor repairs, helping with the gardens, and giving tours when no one else is available (the house is open to the public during the summer months). A graduate of UMass-Amherst with a degree in history, he also is involved in researching and updating the society's exhibits.

The King Caesar house was built in 1808 by Ezra Weston Jr., who was affectionately known as King Caesar because he was the largest shipbuilder in America and the largest shipowner in the world. The house ranks as one of the finest examples of Federal architecture in New England.

Waterhouse says he makes extra money by working for Duxbury's Snug Harbor Boat Works, building wooden sailing boats. He would like to get a master's degree in history and eventually teach sixth-grade students.

As for whether he feels cut off from other young folks in Boston — the answer is no. He lives with his girlfriend, and their friends enjoy coming down from the city for backyard barbecues and afternoons on the beach.